

ALRESFORD RURAL DISTRICT.

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE YEAR 1914.

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ON THE  
ALRESFORD RURAL DISTRICT,  
FOR THE YEAR 1914,  
BY  
THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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GENTLEMEN,

I have arranged my Annual Report under the usual headings.

(1) **Death Rate during the Year.**—During 1914 the deaths registered in the District were 71, to which number must be added 11 deaths of residents dying out of the District, giving a total of 82, from which number two deaths of non-residents have to be subtracted, giving 80 as the true death rate for the District, which is equal to 10.6 deaths per 1000 of the inhabitants. This rate is 1.2 per 1000 below the average of the last five years. On analysing the deaths still further it is found that 43 per cent. of them occurred in people over 65 years of age, and that there were 11 deaths of people between 80 and 90 years of age, and in six cases the recorded age was over 90 years. These good results must not be ascribed wholly to the healthy state of the District, for it must be remembered that the number of old people living in rural districts, as compared with urban, is proportionately larger. The death rate of infants under one year of age was 58.39 per 1000 nett births, compared with an average of 77.97 for the preceding five years. This is satisfactory as far as it goes, but half of these deaths were due to debility—either congenital or acquired after birth—which is in many cases preventable if the mother is properly cared for before and after confinement, and steps are taken to see that the child is healthily

clothed and properly fed. The Notification of Births Act is now in force in the District, and leaflets on the upbringing of babies are sent to the mother after confinement. This is a step in the right direction, but requires backing up by the visits of qualified women able to instruct the more ignorant mothers. No death from infantile diarrhœa was recorded during the year, and this is to be attributed partly to the absence of any prolonged spell of hot weather in the autumn and partly to the improvement of the sanitary condition within and around the home, and to the increased cleanliness of the storage and preparation of the infants' food. It is very satisfactory to record that no deaths occurred from infectious disease, commonly so called; but there were seven deaths from phthisis or pulmonary tuberculosis, which is now a notifiable disease. Cancer in its various forms was answerable for ten deaths, and this disease and phthisis come third and fourth in the total number of deaths, being only exceeded by heart disease and bronchitis.

(2) **The Birth Rate.**—The births numbered 137, equal to a rate of 18.19 per 1000 of the inhabitants, which is about the average for the last five years.

(3) **The Physical Features of the District.**—The sub-soil of the greater part of the District is chalk overlaid by gravelly loam. In many of the Villages there are some thick deposits of gravels, and on some of the higher ground there is a top sub-soil of clayey loam. The surface of the District is undulating and well wooded. The lower lying Villages, such as Bramdean, Hinton Ampner, Cheriton, and parts of Tichborne, Bishop's Sutton, and Chilton Candover, are damp and the roads become flooded when there is any excess of rain; evidently the water courses draining this area are being gradually choked up, and require attention.

(4) **Occupation of the Inhabitants.**—The population is practically all rural and agricultural, there being no factories in the District if we exclude laundries employing machinery.

(5) **House Accommodation.**—The District is fairly well off for cottages as far as numbers are concerned, but a few more good cottages with gardens in each Village for farm labourers would readily find tenants, and might help to some extent to attract better men to the land, and keep young married couples on it. Several new ones have been erected in Alresford, Tich-



borne, West Tisted, Bramdean, and Hinton Ampner, in the latter two Villages replacing old ones that have been pulled down. There are many cottages, which by reason of their construction are damp, ill-ventilated, and deficient in sunlight, and the bedrooms have no fireplace, rendering it impossible to warm and ventilate them properly, especially in cases of sickness. Overcrowding is rather frequent, and it is impossible to remedy, as if the families are turned out there are no larger cottages to send them to. The class of cottage we chiefly want is one with two good rooms downstairs, consisting of a scullery with back kitchen combined and a good living room and three good bedrooms upstairs. It ought not to be impossible to build cottages of this class in pairs, which would bring in a small return for the outlay, and not be an eyesore to the neighbourhood.

(6) **Water Supply.**—The water supply has been sufficient and of good quality, and no deaths or illness have been attributed to its impurity. During the last four weeks of the year 2000 soldiers were billeted in Old Alresford, Alresford, Bighton, Bishop's Sutton, and Itchen Stoke, and no complaints were made as to the water supplied to them, and there were no signs of the supply becoming polluted, although the sanitary arrangements were taxed to the utmost.

In parts of Alresford there are dead wells in proximity to the water supply, but the filtering power of the chalk, owing to the absence of fissures in it, seems to be so thorough that pollution does not occur. If at any time a well is found to become contaminated it can be immediately closed, and a supply obtained from the Alresford Water Works. Deep wells sunk in the chalk supply many houses, and others depend upon rain-water stored in tanks.

(7) **Milk Supply.**—There are many dairy farms in the District supplying milk chiefly to London. In many of the Villages condensed milk is used owing to the difficulty of obtaining fresh cow's milk, the selling of milk retail, in small quantities, entailing too much trouble and expense. In cases of illness, however, the farmers are always most kind and ready to give milk, if they can spare it, to their cottagers. Very little butter is made in the District, and so the supply of skim milk is limited even if the people sufficiently appreciated its value as a food. Nearly the whole of the body-building material is found in the skim milk, and a substitute for the absence of the butter fat could be easily found. Skim milk could also be largely used in cooking and in other ways, and lower the consumption of meat.

The cows as a rule are in cleaner state than formerly, due chiefly to the fact that owing to the milder winters they are kept, in many cases, out in the field during the night, but I don't think there has been much increase in the actual grooming and cleansing of the animals before milking or in the washing of the men's hands before and during the process of milking. More care might also be taken of the churns and milk-pails after cleaning; for instance, in one case I found the pails after being washed after the morning's milking hung to dry on the posts of some fencing round a manure heap, from which was arising noxious gases. The lighting, cleanliness, and the ventilation of the cowsheds shows improvement, as also does the cleanliness around them, but if we are ever to go back to the days of milkmaids there will have to be still greater improvement made in that direction. We cannot expect the farmer to spend more money in giving the public a cleaner milk supply at the present wholesale price he obtains for it, but there are many little details in the management of the cows and their surroundings which would greatly improve the quality of the milk without adding to the cost of its production. We can no more obtain the ideal milk at a low cost than we can have a cheap loaf and high wages.

The Sanitary Inspector has made 240 inspections of the cowsheds and 35 nuisances have been abated.

(8) **Food Supply.**—No food was condemned during the year as unfit for human consumption. One sample of the following articles of food was taken by the County Council under the Food and Drugs Acts, viz., arrowroot, baking powder, margarine, and pepper, and two samples of butter, all of which were found on analysis to be pure.

(9) **Bake-houses and Slaughter-houses.**—These premises have been regularly inspected during the year, 42 visits having been paid to the former, and five nuisances were found and abated.

The Slaughter-houses were inspected ten times, and everything was found in order. All these houses are owned by butchers who do their own slaughtering, there is no public Slaughter-house.

(10) **Drainage, Sewage, and Sewage Disposal.**—The whole District being rural in character, there is no sewage scheme in any part. The larger houses have w.c.'s draining into dead wells, which are cleaned out at the expense of the occupier, by a firm



which has the proper machinery, and who dispose of the sewage either on the occupier's land or on their own farm. The smaller houses and cottages have, with some few exceptions, the old privy vault in the garden or an earth-closet. The latter have slowly increased during the last few years, but in some cases they are very improperly attended to, either no dry absorbent material is supplied, or they are not emptied often enough, and become a nuisance. The contents of these privy vaults and earth-closets are removed by either the owner or occupier, and dug into the garden or allotment if there is one, otherwise they are removed by contract and disposed of on the land.

Those occupiers in Alresford, who are unable to dispose of their own house-refuse, have it removed twice weekly by a firm with whom the District Council have made a contract; the refuse is stored in metal receptacles, with a well-fitting lid, pending removal. Unfortunately, this method of disposing of house-refuse is not used as much as it ought to be, and heaps of ashes mixed up with orange peel, potatoe parings, and such like matter are found at the back of cottages, even when there is a good garden to bury this waste. It is too much trouble for some to put up the "D." in the window to show they have refuse to be removed.

During the year Mr. Green, the Sanitary Inspector, has joined His Majesty's Forces, and Mr. Frank Smith has been appointed to carry out his duties during his absence. Owing to the billeting of two thousand troops in the District from the beginning of December, the Sanitary Inspector's work was greatly increased. Great credit is due to him for the expeditious way he carried out the erection of the latrines, and made other necessary sanitary arrangements at 48 hours' notice, including the Sunday on which the troops arrived. The emptying of the latrines was carried out regularly by the contractors, who did their work under great difficulties to the entire satisfaction of the Military and Sanitary Authorities. The cleanliness of the town of Alresford did not suffer in any way from the presence of the troops; in fact, I think there was less untidiness in the streets than usual, as the fatigue parties did their clearing up in a methodical and thorough manner, such as we naturally expect of a disciplined body of men.

(11) **Schools.**—The sanitary condition of the Schools is satisfactory, and they have a wholesome supply of water. The Bishop's Sutton School had to close a fortnight earlier than usual

for the Christmas holidays owing to an epidemic of whooping cough. There was a mild epidemic of chicken-pox amongst the children attending Old Alresford School, and therefore it was closed a week earlier than usual at Christmas.

(12) **Infectious Diseases.**—During the year eight cases of scarlet fever were notified as occurring in five different localities. One case had just arrived from London, and was no doubt infected there; one was a boy from the Training Ship “Mercury,” where there were a few cases, and he was sent back to the “Mercury” Isolation Hospital; and another case occurred in a soldier’s wife, temporarily staying here, and was most probably infected in Aldershot. Two cases occurred in school children, and one was probably infected by the other, which was a very mild case, and the source of infection could not be traced. In no case could the milk be suspected as the source of the outbreak. There were no deaths, all the cases being of a mild type. Three cases of diphtheria occurred during the year. One of these occurred in an outlying cottage, and, although the house was sanitary, there was a bad-smelling over-full privy vault not far from it. The other two cases occurred in school children, and the only insanitary condition found was the overcrowding of the bedrooms. This has been remedied, and no fresh cases have been notified. During the year it has been demonstrated that sores on milkers’ hands may be infected with the bacillus of diphtheria, and so infect the milk and cause an outbreak among the consumers. How the hands became infected was not discovered, but swabs taken from the men’s throats proved to be free from the disease. I mention this fact to show how necessary it is that milkers’s hands should not only be clean, but also free from sores.

(13) **Vaccination.**—During the year 83 children were successfully vaccinated, and 44 exemptions were obtained. This gives a percentage of 34.7 of unvaccinated children.

(14) **Tuberculosis.**—Fourteen cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified during the year, and seven deaths occurred from the disease; more than half were between twenty-five and forty-five years of age, the best wage-earning period of life. During the year the organisation of a scheme by the County Medical Officer of Health has been nearly completed for the better treatment and diagnosis of tuberculosis in its various forms. It is to be hoped that when everything is in working order we shall diagnose cases in an earlier stage, when curative treatment is



more hopeful, and before they have become a source of infection to others. We want to see the cases not only before there are any bacilli in the sputum, but before there is any sputum at all, and it is hoped that, with the aid of skilled tuberculosis officers, we shall attain that object, although the difficulty of recognising the disease in these early stages is often very great. Every case is visited on notification, and directions given to prevent spread of infection, and on removal or death of a case of phthisis the rooms occupied are disinfected.

(15) **Bye-laws.**—The only Bye-laws adopted by this District are “With respect to new buildings and certain matters in connection with buildings.”

(16) **Offensive Trades.**—Thirty-one inspections were made, and five nuisances found were abated.

(17) **Improvements Required.**—A steam disinfector for the disinfecting of infectious clothing would be useful, although up to the present we never have had infectious outbreaks traced to clothing which has been hung up in a room to be disinfected by sulphur or formalin gases.

(18) **Factories and Workshops.**—Seventy-six inspections have been made during the year, and in twelve cases want of cleanliness was found, and in one case there was overcrowding. All these defects were remedied.

(19) **Local Government Enquiries.**—None.

(20) **River Pollution.**—In one case it was found that the contents of two earthclosets were being emptied into the river in The Soke, Alresford. The drainage from a house was also found discharging into the river. Both these evils have been remedied.

(21) **The Housing and Town Planning Act.**—Eighty houses were fully reported on during the year. No houses were condemned as unfit for habitation, but fifty-four defects were reported and remedied.

Twenty-two new houses were built during the year, chiefly cottages.

(22) **Improvements Effected During 1914.**—The remedying of structural defects and the abating of nuisances that were found on inspection of the District occupied the chief attention during the year past. One thousand nine hundred and forty-seven inspections were made, and 160 nuisances or defects were found and abated on the informal notice of the Inspector of Nuisances, with the exception of two, which had to be brought before the notice of the Sanitary Authority before the work was completed.

These inspections do not include those by the Medical Officer of Health, which are made on his daily rounds, the results of which are only reported if there is anything found which requires attention.

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

F. W. JOLLYE.

N.B.—The Tables of Vital Statistics for the District may be seen at the Office of the Clerk to the Council, at East Street, Alresford.





